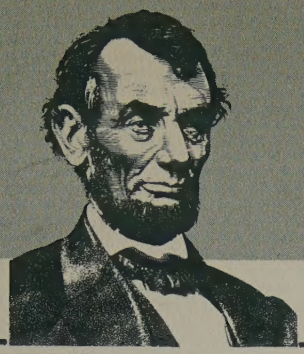

Lincoln Lore

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THE BLEAKLEY & MONTGOMERY LEDGERS

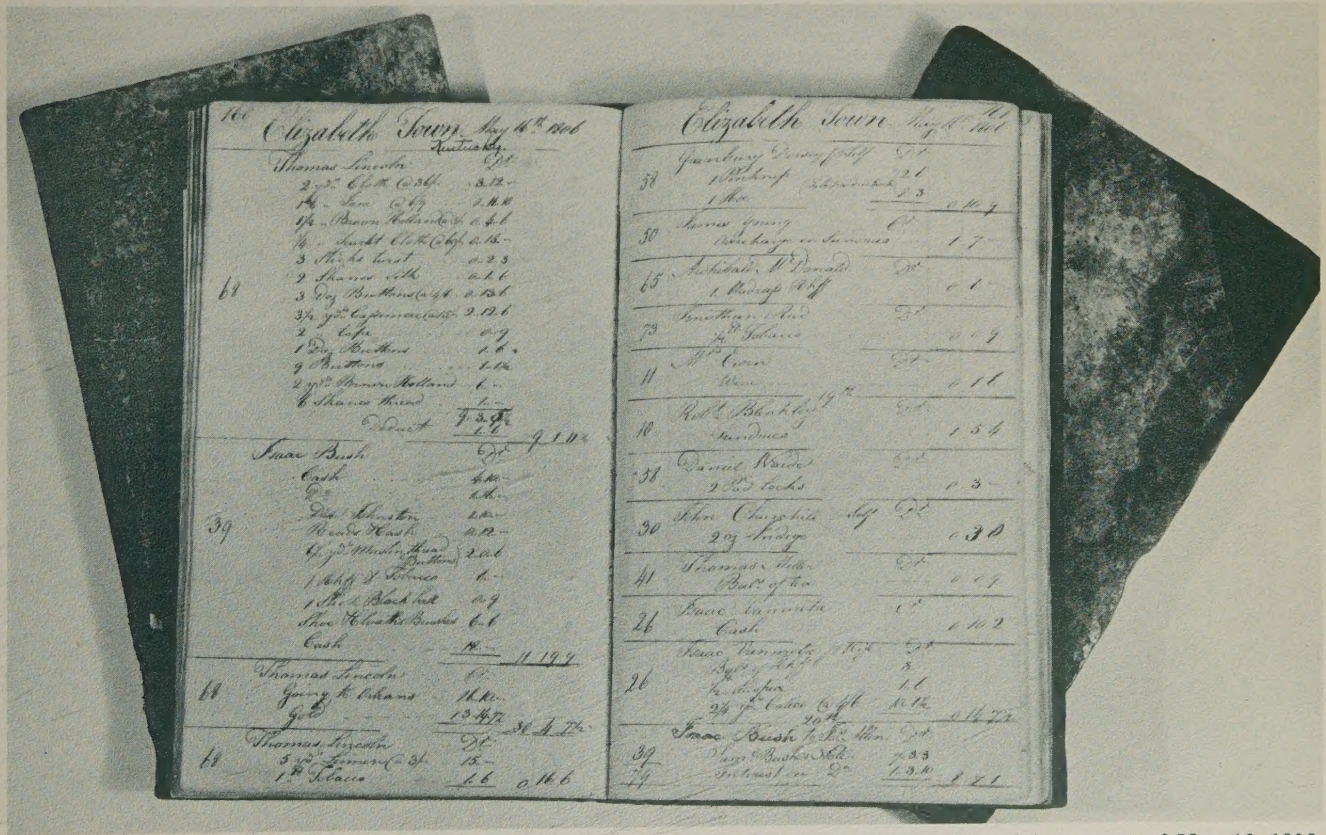
The financial standing of Abraham Lincoln's father is best portrayed by a study of his accounts in Bleakley & Montgomery's ledgers and day book which are a part of the collection of the Lincoln National Life Foundation.

These accounts of Thomas Lincoln with the Elizabethtown, Kentucky mercantile firm cover the period from July 30, 1804 to June 3, 1808. The account books are designated as Ledger "A" and Ledger "B". There is also a day book for the period of June 1, 1805 to November 22, 1806. The twenty Thomas Lincoln entries in the day book begin with the date of August 23, 1805 and end with the date of November 12, 1806.

It is believed that the Ledgers "A" and "B" were the first two used by the firm of Bleakley & Montgomery. This mercantile firm was composed of Robert Bleakley and William Montgomery who arrived in Elizabethtown about the year 1801. Previous to this they found employment in the same establishment in Baltimore, Maryland. The two partners were Scotch-Irishmen who in early manhood were expelled from their country because they were Orangemen. According to Samuel Haycraft, Jr., the author of "A History of Elizabethtown, Kentucky and Its Surroundings" (written in 1869) Montgomery "was arrested and confined in a prison from which men were taken and executed daily. Montgomery was released from prison through the interposition of his aunt, who was the wife of the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland on the condition that he would emigrate to America."

Haycraft relates that "Bleakley who was engaged in the same rebellion, evading the officers of the government, concealed himself in a vessel and thus made his escape to the United States. They married sisters, two of the daughters of William Withers, Esq., a very respectable Virginia gentleman near West Point (Kentucky)." The Kentucky historian stated that "perhaps their stock of goods was the first that deserved the name of an assortment."

Haycraft thought that "There is something romantic and interesting in the history of these two men. Born on the same Island, engaged in the same rebellion, both compelled to leave to save their lives; emigrating to the same country, finding employment in the same establishment in the city of Baltimore, partners in merchandising in Elizabethtown, marrying sisters and then living



Bleakley & Montgomery's Ledgers and Day Book. The day book is laid open to Thomas Lincoln's account of May 16, 1806.

and dying on adjacent farms." Yet, in spite of their exciting life history these two men are only remembered by Lincoln students as merchants who did business with the father of the sixteenth president.

The store was located on the Public Square in a log house. The building was located on Lot No. 6 on the corner of the square which is now occupied by the First Hardin National Bank. Bleakley & Montgomery did a thriving business and were very popular citizens of the county seat town.

These early merchants conducted their business under the English monetary system of pounds, shillings and pence. However, there are occasional entries of payments in dollars and cents. Unfortunately, all the day books of the period of Thomas Lincoln's purchases are not extant and for that reason it is impossible to determine every item he purchased. Many times the merchants would enter several purchases in the ledgers as "Sundries" with reference to the folio or page in the day book which listed the items in detail.

The early biographers of the sixteenth president, without exception, depicted Thomas Lincoln as an indolent pioneer without money and with no financial responsibility in his community. But the Bleakley & Montgomery ledgers reveal that he had excellent credit and that his purchases were not inconsiderable. Thomas Lincoln was evidently considered by this firm as a valued customer. In fact an examination of his account reveals that he not only purchased on credit, but that he was even charged with sizeable sums for his friends and relatives.

Otis M. Mather, writing for *The Register of the Kentucky State Historial Society*, January, 1930, Vol. 28, No. 82, in an article entitled "Thomas Lincoln's Accounts With Elizabethtown Merchants" observed that "Thomas Lincoln began making purchases soon after Ledger 'A' was opened, but his transactions with the firm ceased long before Ledger 'B' was discarded." Ledger "B" has accounts running as late as the year 1810.

From all indications Thomas Lincoln's last transaction was made on June 3, 1808, when he purchased "sandpaper and screws," for which he was charged one shilling and three pence. One entry for the same date follows: "Bals put to the credit of work done. His note 12 (shillings)." This credit squared his account.

The reason for Thomas Lincoln's failure to make further purchases from Bleakley & Montgomery's store can be attributed to the fact that it was about this time (date of last purchase) that he contemplated moving to the Sinking Spring farm located on the South Fork of Nolin River. However, he did not get a title to the farm until, December 1808, when he bought it from his future brother-in-law, Isaac Bush. From the summer or fall of 1808, until his removal to Indiana in the fall of 1816, Thomas Lincoln lived a distance from fourteen to eighteen miles from Elizabethtown and the friendly merchants.

In analysing Thomas Lincoln's accounts Otis M. Mather made the following statements:

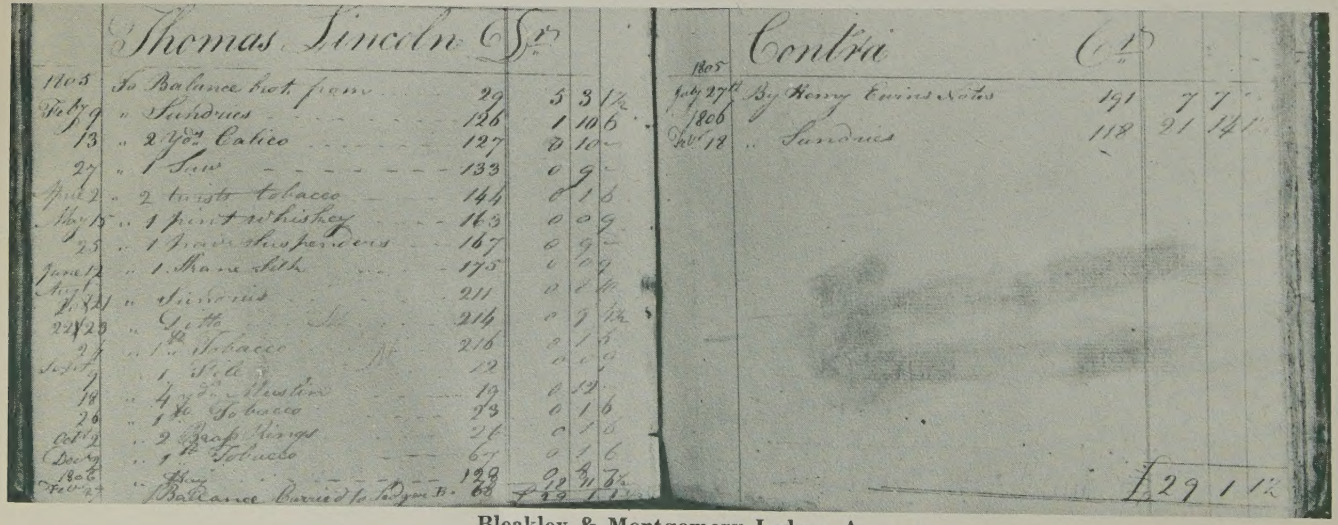
"It is of interest to note that in the statement of Thomas Lincoln's account there are charges for many tools pertaining to his trade as a carpenter—one cast steel (casteel) saw, on August 8, 1804, one plane bit, September 6, 1804; one file, November 10, 1804; one saw, February 27, 1805; and others. The item of '1 Fiddle Bass,' on November 6, 1804, for which he was charged 1 shilling and six pence, must have been a fiddle string. Though Thomas Lincoln has not been mentioned in history as a musician, this purchase would indicate that he was possibly a fiddler in his early days, and this accomplishment may have been some attraction to the young lady who was soon to be his bride. And the charge of one pound and sixteen shillings . . . for a hat, on January 1, 1805, is persuasive evidence that Thomas wore no slouch when he went a-wooing. A pair of suspenders for nine shillings . . . which he purchased on May 25, 1805 should have been sufficiently ornamental for any rustic Beau Brummel.

"A pint of whiskey and a pound or two of tobacco now and then indicated that Thomas was not wholly averse to the superfluities of life. But let it be said for him that his purchases of whiskey were much less frequent than the average for the customers of Bleakley & Montgomery.

"Perhaps the most interesting of the entries are those of the Spring of the year 1806, when Thomas Lincoln was about to become the head of a family of his own. On March 1 of that year he had to his credit on the books the neat sum of 18 pounds, 11 shillings and 6½ pence . . . On the 16th of May of the same year he was credited with 'Sundries' to the amount of 30 pounds, 4 shillings and 7½ pence. In the meantime his purchases had been small—one half of a calf skin on May 3—possibly this was for his wedding boots—and two charges for 'Sundries' on May 16, one for 16 shillings and 6 pence, the other for 9 pounds, 1 shilling and 11½ pence. On May 20 Isaac Bush made purchases to the amount of 15 pounds on Thomas Lincoln's account. On May 21, and 22, 1806, Thomas purchased 'Sundries' to the goodly amount of 38 pounds, 1 shilling and 8 pence. It would be gratifying to Lincoln students to know the items making up the sum total of these purchases, but we most content ourselves to believe that they represented the final preparation for the wedding . . . On June 2, 1806, a bridle was purchased for 13 shillings and 6 pence. This was probably used on the horse which a few days later carried Thomas to Springfield, Kentucky, where, on June 10, 1806, he signed a marriage bond, and on June 12 he married Nancy Hanks. The honeymoon must have been short, for on June 16, four days after the wedding, we find Thomas again buying 'Sundries' to the amount of 7 shillings and 3 pence from Bleakley & Montgomery, at Elizabethtown."

In making a study of the Bleakley & Montgomery ledgers and day book it is significant to point out that Kentucky and Virginia mercantile firms used a particular sterling of their own and their shilling was worth 16⅔ cents (20 shillings equal 1 pound). Vertification of this may be found in T. S. Berry's "Western Prices Before 1861," page 364. For example, referring to the Thomas Lincoln entry in the Bleakley & Montgomery day book dated May 20, 1806, the entry is for ¼ yard of Scarlet Cloth @ 60 which cost 0 pounds, 15 shillings and 0 pence. This makes the cost of the item exactly $2.50. While this seems to be a big price to pay for one-fourth yard of cloth, the cost was high as it was likely imported and then transported across the mountains. Advances of 100 to 150 percent on such goods over the Baltimore or Philadelphia prices was common in Kentucky in 1806.

Perhaps no better documentary source can be produced than the Bleakley & Montgomery ledgers to attest to Thomas Lincoln's ability to provide for his family the necessities and comforts of life. Certainly we can conclude that during the period from 1804 to 1808 he was a prosperous pioneer.



Bleakley & Montgomery Ledger A
Thomas Lincoln's account from February 9, 1805 to February 27, 1806.

BLEAKLEY & MONTGOMERY DAY BOOK
June 1, 1805 to November 22, 1806

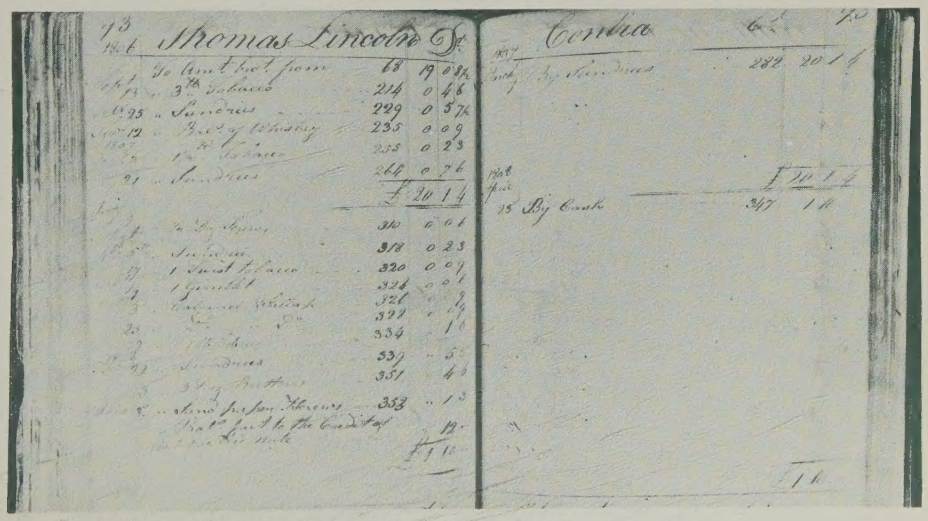
Thomas Lincoln, Dr.

59	214	Aug. 23, 1805	½ Lb. Raisins		1	1½		
			1 Foot Adze		8	3	0.9.4½	
68	156	May 3, 1806	½ Calf Skin		3			
68	160	May 16, 1806	2 yds. cloth @ 36	3	12			
			1¾ " Jane @ 6/9		11	10		
			1½ " Brown Holland @ 3		4	6		
			¼ " Scarlet Cloth @ 60		15			
			3 sticks twist		2	3		
			2 skanes Silk		1	6		
			3 Doz. Buttons @ 4/6		13	6		
			3½ yds. Cassimere @ 15	2	12	6		
			2 " tape			9		
			1 Doz. Buttons		1	6		
			9 Buttons		1	1½		
			2 yds. Brown Holland		6			
			6 skanes thread		1		9.3.9½	
			Deduct		1	6	9.1.11½	
68	160	May 16, 1806	5 yds. Linnen @ 3/		15			
			1 lb. Tobacco		1	6	0.16.6	
68	162	May 20, 1806	Thomas Lincoln to Isaac Bush answered for the Latter	15				
68	162	May 21, 1806	3 yds. Coating @ 21/6	3	4	6		
			1½ " Brown Holland @ 3/		4	6		
			1¼ " Red flannel @ 6/		7	6		
			1 ⅔ " Doz. Buttons @ 3/9		6	3		
			2 skanes Silk		1	6		
			1 stick twist			9		
			3 skanes thread			6		
	22		Cash $112.70	33	16	2	38.0.10	
68	163	May 24, 1806	Thomas Lincoln pr. order					
			Silk for Mrs. Ogden		12			
68	167	June 2, 1806	1 Tipt Bridle		13	6		
68	168	June 4, 1806	Sundries for Mrs. Johnston		7	6		
68	174	June 16, 1806	½ set Knives & Forks		5			
			3 skanes Silk		2	3	0. 7. 3	
68	175	June 20, 1806	1 skane thread			2		
68	176	June 21, 1806	1 shoe knife		1	6		
			2 skanes thread			4	0. 1.10	
68	196	Aug. 4, 1806	½ Doz. spoons		6			
			1 lb. Tobacco		1	6	0. 7. 6	
68	196	Aug. 6, 1806	Thomas Lincoln answered for	1	4			
68	202	Aug. 14, 1806	Thomas Lincoln answered for Henry Erwin	1				
93	214	Sept. 13, 1806	3 lbs. Tobacco		4	6		
93	229	Oct. 25, 1806	Needles & Whiskey		1	1½		
			¼ Bushel Salt		4	6		
93	235	Nov. 12, 1806	Bals of Whiskey			9		

Contra Cr.

59	118	Feb. 18, 1806	2400 lbs. pork @ 15/	18				
			494 " beef @ 15/	3	14	1½	21.14.1½	
68	160	May 16, 1806	Going to Orleans	16	10			
			Gold	13	14	7½	30.4.7½	

EDITOR'S NOTE: TWO OF THE ABOVE ENTRIES MERIT SOME NOTICE; NAMELY, "SILK FOR MRS. OGDEN," AND "SUNDRIES FOR MRS. JOHNSTON." DID THESE TWO WOMEN MAKE UP TOM LINCOLN'S WEDDING OUTFIT? MRS. OGDEN WAS THE WIFE OF BENJAMIN OGDEN, A METHODIST PREACHER AND THE KEEPER OF THE KEYS OF THE COURTHOUSE. MRS. JOHNSTON WAS THE WIFE OF DANIEL JOHNSTON (DIED 1816), THE HARDIN COUNTY JAILOR, WHOM TOM LINCOLN WAS DESTINED TO TAKE AS HIS SECOND WIFE ON DECEMBER 2, 1819, NANCY HANKS LINCOLN HAVING DIED ON OCTOBER 5, 1818.



Bleakley & Montgomery Ledger B
Thomas Lincoln's account from September 13, 1806 to June 3, 1808.

BLEAKLEY & MONTGOMERY LEDGER A
1804 - 1806

	1804	Thomas Lincoln	Dr.						1804	Contra	Cr.				
25	July 30-31	Sundries	fo. 19		18			25	Oct. 16	By Beef	63	3			
										" Balance		5	3	1½	
	Aug. 8	1 Casteel Saw	28		18										
	Aug. 15	Sundries	33	3	5	3									
	Aug. 27	Ditto	40		1	6									
	Sept. 6	1 Plane Bit	4		1	6									
	Sept. 27	Sundries	54		3	4½									
	Oct. 8	Ditto	60		6	9									
	Nov. 6	1 Fiddle Bass	71		1	6									
	Nov. 10	1 File	73		1	6									£8.3.1½
	1805								1805						
	Jan. 1	1 Hat	105	1	16			59	July 27	By Henry Ewin Notes	191	7	7		
	Jan. 14	Sundries	109		9	9									
		Balance carried to	59				£8.3.1½								
59		To Balance brot from	29	5	3	1½									
	Feb. 9	Sundries	126	1	10	6									
	Feb. 13	2 yds. Calico	127		10										
	Feb. 27	1 Saw	133		9										
	Apr. 4	2 twists Tobacco	144		1	6									
	May 15	1 pint Whiskey	163			9									
	May 25	1 pair Suspenders	167		9										
	June 12	1 skane Silk	175			9									
	Aug. 20-21	Sundries	211		8	10									
	Aug. 22-23	Ditto	214		9	4½									
	Aug. 24	1 twist Tobacco	216		1	6									
	Sept. 9	1 File	12			9									
	Sept. 18	4 yds. Muslin	19		12										
	Sept. 26	1 twist Tobacco	23		1	6									
	Oct. 2	2 Brass Rings	26		1	6									
	Dec. 2	1 twist Tobacco	67		1	6									
	1806								1806						
	Feb. 27	Hay	128		8	7½		59	Feb. 18	Sundries	118	21	14	1½	£29.1.12
			68												
		Balance Carried to Ledger B	18	11	6½		£29.1.1½								

BLEAKLEY & MONTGOMERY LEDGER B
1805 - 1807 (10)

	Thomas Lincoln		Dr.							Contra	Cr.				
	1806								1806						
68	May 3	½ Calf Skin	156		3				March 1	By Balance brot from Ledger A	59	18	11	6½	
	May 16	Sundries	160		16	6									
		Do.	"	9	1	11½			May 16	Sundries	160	30	4	1½	
	May 20	Isaac Bush	162	15						Balance		14	6	11½	
	May 21-22	Sundries	"	38	1		£63.3.1½								£63.3.1½
		Balance (to be paid in pork)		14	6	11½									
	May 24	Silk	163		12										
	June 2	1 Bridle	167		13	6									
	June 4	Sundries	168		7	6									
	June 16	Do.	174		7	3									
	June 19	1 skane thread	175			2									
	June 21	Sundries	176			10									
	Aug. 4	Do.	196		7	6									
	Aug. 6	Answered for B.Bromfield	198	1	4										
		" " Henry Ewin	202	1	6		£19.0.8½			By. Amt. Carried to	93				£19.0.8½
93		To. Amt. brot from	68	19		8½									
	Sept. 13	3 tw. Tobacco	214		4	6									
	Oct. 25	Sundries	229		5	7½									
	Nov. 12	Bals of Whiskey	235			9									
	1807								1807						
	Jan. 3	1½ tw. Tobacco	255		2	3									
	Jan. 21	Sundries	264		7	6	£20.1.4	93	March 9	By Sundries	282	20	1	4	£20.1.4
	July 2	½ Doz. Screws	310			6									
	Aug. 4-5	Sundries	318		2	3									
	Aug. 17	1 twist Tobacco	320			9									
	Sept. 19	1 Gimblet	324			6									
	Oct. 3	Calomel & Jallop	326			9									
	Oct. 25	Do. Do.	328			9									
	Nov. 2	1 lb. Tobacco	334		1	6									
	1808								1808						
	Feb. 22	Sundries	339		5	3									
	May 13	3 Doz. Buttons	351		4	6			April 23	By Cash	347	1	10		
	June 3	Sandpaper & Screws	353		1	3									
		Bals. put to the Credit of work done His Note			12		£1.10.0								£1.10.0

EDITOR'S NOTE: THERE IS A MAY 20, 1806 ENTRY ON PAGE 39 OF LEDGER B INDICATING THAT THOMAS LINCOLN (folio 162) CREDITED THE ACCOUNT OF ISAAC BUSH IN THE AMOUNT OF £15. FROM THE STANDPOINT OF BOOKKEEPING THERE ARE LIKELY MANY DISCREPANCIES IN THESE ACCOUNTS DUE TO THE FRAGMENTARY CONDITION OF THE LEDGERS.